

# ItLUGFest LECCO

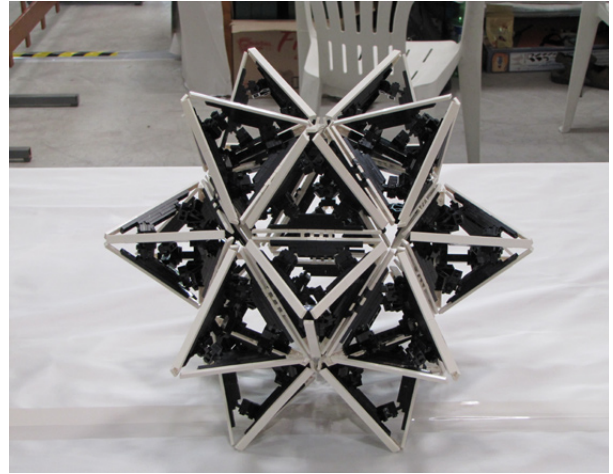
## An outsider's view

By Delia Balsells

Pictures by Thomas Wesselski

- 7577 visitors (3075 on Saturday, the rest on Sunday) (without the opening)
- 71 AFOLs (5 Holland, 3 Germany, 1 Spain)
- 25 AFOLs as visitors (2 Germany)

I had heard about the meeting of LEGO® fans in Italia, particularly of the one they had last year in Ballabio, and this time I didn't relinquish the opportunity of attending the event accompanying an AFOL. By the way, the term AFOL is something I have learned as time went by. I must confess that what I'm about to describe is my experience, that is to say, the experience of someone who, having attended more than one LEGO related event doesn't love the brand nor considers herself a "fan" of this toy. As a matter of fact, I'd say there hasn't been a single trace of LEGO in my childhood.



I'll start by commenting the pre-event treatment we got from LEGO. Being foreigners in Italy we have been received most excellently. Every doubt we had has been responded quickly and we have been kept informed of any news concerning the development of the event.

My general experience at the event has been good. I was at the event only for a day, the day of the inauguration. As a result, when I arrived the exhibitors had everything almost prepared for the visit of the local authorities and the general public. I asked since when they had been working on the set-up... because those structures, some quite spectacular could not be built in a single day... and I think the AFOLs had been given access to the installations a week earlier so they could bring in their constructions and start setting things up. I think that's great, it isn't easy to get a place for this kind of event and to get this kind of facilities - it is always better to







organise something calmly and with time. As a matter of fact, it was clear that everything was well organised and hadn't been planned in just a couple of days. There was a play area for children with tables ready to be used, shops ready to sell and exhibitors with long tables (according to a well designed plan) full of constructions that were almost ready to be shown to the public, a corner for the organisers where any doubt could be solved (they even informed us of the train time tables and the location of the railway station)...

The event was officially opened, so officially that the mayor

and other council members came, which gave the event a certain air and went to show the level of collaboration between the members of the organisation and the town council (as well as other entities which were mentioned in the opening speech). After the opening there were some snacks prepared in an area adjacent to the exhibition - there was plenty of food even though I arrived a little late. After that everyone went to their places, waiting for their creations to be admired and valued, first by the authorities and later by the rest of the people, lots of people (some arrived early and were waiting at the door or in the nearby cafeteria... we met some kids who were excited and anxious to get in. You could see they had been waiting for the exhibition for days).

From my point of view the Italian event was well organised and the information concerning the number of people who visited show the amount of pre-organisation, that is to say, the promotion of the event, had been sufficient (even though the location of the event was provisional and different from the year before and).

Being more subjective, I, a non AFOL, who doesn't see much more than plastic bricks to build things following an instruction manual and consider LEGO® a children's toy, admit that this event (as well as others I have been to) make you see things in a different light. You see there is no need for instructions to be able to create and that the imagination of each builder is unlimited, and that besides bricks, there are personal relations of people who talk about "studs" and understand each other, sharing a hobby that has gone beyond childhood.







During the time I was there (in the end just a couple of hours) I saw there are people who do not just know each other from some internet forum, but who have met at other events in the same or event different countries. I wasn't registered as an exhibitor, I was accompanying my boyfriend who did exhibit. I went on a walk to see the exhibition and when I finished I admit I came to the point of not knowing what to do next. I sat down at our table and saw the people passing by. It wasn't a solution to my boredom, but it did help pass the time. I saw people walking by as if they were enjoying the view (as would be my case if I went to such an event), entire families who came with their kids who were dying to see the constructions and who would run off all excited to the next creation before they had had a good look at the previous one. There were also teenagers who really like LEGO® despite their age (the future AFOLs who will "come out of the closet" soon) and who would observe every detail of a construction and ask the exhibitor questions (you could see the satisfaction on the face of the latter when their work was recognised and generated questions). Those exhibits that included some kind of motion has people crowding around to see their inventions close up - to me those were the builders who generated most expectation as both young and old were eager to see their work. I also believe that to people who see LEGO like I do, the constructions with movement or that represent well know film or cartoon characters are the most attractive ones.

Personally, the constructions I like best (corroborating in a way what I wrote above) were the wind turbine park with a large number of wind mills in motion (there was merit in that... it was



pretty hard to keep the mills standing and moving), minifigs made with LEGO pieces and, obviously, of a larger size that the original ones (like an angel and a devil, smurfs...) the representation of a beautiful white palace/castle and tower that was particularly spectacular because of its size. I also liked the mosaics (of a dog, Minnie Mouse...) and I'd like to mention castle madewith minifigs that represent a tradition from where I live: the "castellers". There were dioramas representing entire cities and that had a lot of detail... but personally, once you see one you've seen them all . It wasn't something that impressed me after having seen other cities in other events. To finish off, I'm sure that for people who know and like films like Star Wars, Harry Potter, etc, or who love cars (there were quite a few in LEGO Technic) would appreciate the constructions of those themes that were shown... personally I can't because I don't know much about these things. I can only corroborate the likeness of some of the life-sized LEGO constructions at the event that were shown next to a picture of the original.

Finally, I will admit that, as time goes by and having lived with an AFOL and attended more that one event organized by itLUG, I'm starting to understand that for them it isn't just a toy (as it would be for me), but sharing their hobby with others (just like people who like the same style of music, the same sport...) that started when they were little, or, if they abandoned it at some time, which they haven't recovered thanks to the internet and events like this one from a different perspective than when LEGO was just toy for them.

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